



First Steps Family Assessment Interview and IFSP Meeting Observation Tool

June 2025

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Office of Childhood, Early Intervention Section

First Steps Family Assessment Interview and IFSP Meeting Observation Tool Instructions

Purpose: The *First Steps Family Assessment Interview and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) Meeting Observation Tool* is designed to measure the use of Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) during a family assessment interview and during an IFSP meeting. The intent of the observation tool is to examine the interactions, discussions and overall tone of a family assessment interview and an IFSP meeting, not to serve as a script for conversations. The tool can be used to observe Service Coordinator and Provider practices during a family assessment interview and an IFSP meeting to help identify the need for targeted technical assistance and/or additional training.

The tool also assists the regional System Point of Entry (SPOE) Directors with the annual needs assessment. The needs assessment identifies the strengths, challenges and any related training and technical assistance needed in the region, based on observations of Service Coordinator activities. Observation data is submitted annually to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) as part of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) report to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education.

Description: The observation tool consists of five essential practices to be observed during a family assessment interview and an IFSP meeting. Essential practice 1 examines the family assessment interview. Essential practices 2-5 focus on the IFSP meeting. Each essential practice identifies three or four observable components necessary to achieve the essential practice. Each observable component has three or four key indicators that specify the EBP, with examples and/or prompts in parentheses.

Procedure: The observation tool is intended to be used in its entirety during a family assessment interview and observation of an initial, six-month or annual IFSP meeting; however, each essential practice may be used and scored independently for follow-up observations. Depending on the type of IFSP meeting observed, the depth in which the observable components and key indicators are covered may vary. This is why the tool reflects the words “Explain/Review” in many places. Conversations will be more in depth and more explanation will be needed with families at an initial meeting. In contrast, six-month or annual IFSP meetings often involve a quick review of information previously shared with families.

The tool utilizes a four-point scale for each observable component. The observer selects one rating per component based on the level in which all key indicators are consistently implemented and, when applicable, demonstrated throughout the meeting. The essential practices do not have to be observed or scored in the order indicated in the tool. A notes section provides a place to write comments about the observations that support the ratings. If the family does not provide verbal permission to participate in a family assessment interview, essential practice 1 is not completed and the observer reflects the family’s decision in the notes section of essential practice 1. Observation of the family assessment interview in essential practice 1 is at the discretion of the observer and ratings may vary depending on the type of family assessment interview conducted (e.g. completed in full or review). Additionally, those acknowledged below who assisted with creation of this tool advised against “Not Applicable” when rating, as this can lead to inconsistent scoring results.

References: The *First Steps Family Assessment Interview and IFSP Meeting Observation Tool* was developed with information from the following sources:

- Agreed-Upon Practices: https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/families/AgreedUponPractices_FinalDraft2_01_08.pdf
- Key Principles: https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/families/Principles_LooksLike_DoesntLookLike3_11_08.pdf
- Division of Early Childhood- Recommended Practices (DEC-RP): <http://ectacenter.org/decrp/>
- Reaching Potentials through Recommended Practices Observation Scale – Home Visiting (RP² OS-HV): http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/implement_ebp/RP2_OS-HV.pdf
- Jung, L. A. (2010). Identifying Families’ Supports and Other Resources. In R. A. McWilliam (Ed.), *Working with Families of Young Children with Special Needs* (pp.9-26). New York: Guilford.
- McWilliam, R. A. (2010). Satisfaction with home routines evaluation (SHoRE). *Routines-Based Early Intervention: Supporting Young Children and Their Families* (pp.258). Baltimore: Brookes.

Acknowledgments: DESE staff in the First Steps program would like to thank the following for their feedback and guidance during the development of this tool:

SPOE Directors and Providers on the Program Improvement Work Group
Sherry Franklin, Technical Assistance Specialist- The Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center
Anne Lucas, Technical Assistance Specialist- The Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center
Debbie Shaver, Ph.D., Evaluation Specialist- IDEA Data Center (IDC)

Date of the Observation:	Type of Family Assessment Interview: Completed in Full or Review	Person Observing:	Person Being Observed:			
Family Assessment Interview: Essential Practice #1: Identify/Review the Concerns, Priorities, and Resources of the Family				Most indicators observed (2 of 3, 3 of 4 or 4 of 5)	Some indicators observed (1 of 3 or 2 of 4)	No indicators observed
Observable Components						
A. Explain/Review the purpose of the family assessment interview and how the information will be used. Key indicators include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Explain/Review this is a chance to get to know the family better. <input type="checkbox"/> Explain/Review that the family assessment interview is voluntary and not required to receive services. <input type="checkbox"/> Explain/Review how the discussion helps to identify the family's supports, resources, and rate the family's satisfaction with daily routines. <input type="checkbox"/> Explain/Review the end goal is to identify priority concerns for the child and family. <input type="checkbox"/> Explain/Review the information collected can be used to create outcomes and determine services based on the family's priorities. 		4	3	2	1	
B. Identify/Review the family's supports and resources. Key indicators include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ask the family about the supports they have access to (e.g. the important people and groups the family associates or interacts with). <input type="checkbox"/> Ask the family about the resources they have available (e.g. the important programs and services the family uses). <input type="checkbox"/> At a minimum, one support and one resource is identified by the family. 		4	3	2	1	
C. Inquire about/Review the family's daily routines and activities. Key indicators include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Determine and rate/Review the family's level of satisfaction with each routine ("When thinking about (ROUTINE), how satisfied are you with this time of day? Is there anything you would like to be different?"). <input type="checkbox"/> Inquire/Review <i>what</i> is working within a routine when the family rates a routine as "Going Ok" or "Working Well." <input type="checkbox"/> Use in-depth questions to acquire more information about routines the family rates as "Not Working Well." <input type="checkbox"/> At a minimum, three routines are discussed in-depth with the family. 		4	3	2	1	
D. Identify/Review the routines that are a priority for the family. Key indicators include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Recap the conversation with the family to ensure all priority routines identified were covered comprehensively. <input type="checkbox"/> Review the level of satisfaction of each routine, including those rated as "Not Working Well." <input type="checkbox"/> Support the family to identify which routine(s) are a priority for them. 		4	3	2	1	
Total: ____/16						
NOTES:						

Date of the Observation:	Type of IFSP Meeting: Initial, Six-Month or Annual	Person Observing:	Person Being Observed:			
IFSP Meeting: Essential Practice #2: Establish and Maintain a Collaborative and Respectful Climate for All IFSP Team Members, Including the Family.			All indicators observed	Most indicators observed (2 of 3 or 3 of 4)	Some indicators observed (1 of 3 or 2 of 4)	No indicators observed
Observable Components						
A. Explain/Review the purpose and process of the IFSP meeting with all members. Key indicators include: <input type="checkbox"/> Explain/Review all team members, including the family, are encouraged to participate in IFSP discussions (e.g., share ideas, ask questions, discuss observations, problem-solve). <input type="checkbox"/> Describe/Review how IFSP discussions reflect the concerns, priorities, and resources identified by the family (e.g. reflect upon the family assessment interview previously conducted). <input type="checkbox"/> Describe/Review how IFSP discussions lead to the identification of services and supports to assist the family's priorities.			4	3	2	1
B. Share/Review information with all team members in a clear manner. Key indicators include: <input type="checkbox"/> Use simple and short statements. <input type="checkbox"/> Explain complex ideas or concepts so they are more easily understood. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid the use of jargon so all team members understand what is being shared. <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate these indicators throughout the IFSP meeting.			4	3	2	1
C. Use active and reflective listening skills. Key indicators include: <input type="checkbox"/> Summarize information shared by all team members ("It sounds like you... ", "I hear you saying..."). <input type="checkbox"/> Pause frequently during conversations to invite team members to ask clarifying questions or offer input. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask open-ended questions ("What do you think about...", "Tell us more about..."). <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate these indicators throughout the IFSP meeting.			4	3	2	1
D. Facilitate the IFSP meeting to include the family as an equal team member. Key indicators include: <input type="checkbox"/> Explain/Reiterate the family knows the child best (e.g., the child's likes, dislikes, strengths, and challenges). <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on what the family wants to accomplish when developing or revising the IFSP. <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledge and validate the family's perspective and their unique situation (e.g., "That must be challenging for you." "I can tell you are excited when. . ."). <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate these indicators throughout the IFSP meeting.			4	3	2	1
Total: ____/16						
NOTES:						

Date of the Observation:	Type of IFSP Meeting: Initial, Six-Month or Annual	Person Observing:	Person Being Observed:			
IFSP Meeting: Essential Practice #3: Prioritize the Family’s Concerns, Considering Child and Family Assessment Information.			All indicators observed	Most indicators observed (2 of 3 or 3 of 4)	Some indicators observed (1 of 3 or 2 of 4)	No indicators observed
Observable Components						
A. Synthesize/Review the information collected regarding the child’s present level of development. Key indicators include: <input type="checkbox"/> Review key health and medical information about the child (e.g., current health status, medical conditions, vision and hearing information). <input type="checkbox"/> Review all five domains of the child’s present levels of development in a family-friendly manner (e.g., strengths and needs identified during the evaluation/assessment are stated in understandable terms rather than a recap of test scores). <input type="checkbox"/> Review the impact of the child’s present levels of development on participation in daily routines and activities (e.g., review evaluation results, family assessment interview findings of what’s working well/not working well, consider multiple settings and various caregivers). <input type="checkbox"/> Involve the family throughout the discussion about the child’s development (e.g., “Does this sound accurate to you?” “What do you notice when he/she...?”).			4	3	2	1
B. Review and update the concerns shared by the family. Key indicators include: <input type="checkbox"/> Review the family-identified concerns related to <u>the child</u> (e.g., “You stated your main concerns were...”). <input type="checkbox"/> Review the family-identified concerns related to <u>the family</u> (e.g., “You stated you really wanted to...”). <input type="checkbox"/> Ask the family about other concerns the IFSP team needs to consider (e.g., “What has changed since we last talked?” “What other concerns do you have that we need to consider?”).			4	3	2	1
C. Identify/Review the family’s priorities related to child and family needs. Key indicators include: <input type="checkbox"/> Explain/Review the purpose of identifying priorities is to select outcomes and services (e.g., acknowledge some concerns might take more time to achieve, the family’s priorities may change over time, and the IFSP team can support changing needs). <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss/Review the family’s most immediate priorities for <u>the child</u> (e.g., “What do you want to work on first?” “What goals do you have in mind for your child?”). <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss/Review the family’s most immediate priorities for <u>the family</u> (e.g., “Are there things you want to do as a family that you cannot do?” “Are there things you are already doing as a family that you need help with?”).			4	3	2	1
			Total: ____/12			
NOTES:						

Date of the Observation:	Type of IFSP Meeting: Initial, Six-Month or Annual	Person Observing:	Person Being Observed:			
IFSP Meeting: Essential Practice #4: Determine/Review IFSP Outcomes for the Child and Family, Considering the Family's Priorities.			All indicators observed	Most indicators observed (2 of 3 or 3 of 4)	Some indicators observed (1 of 3 or 2 of 4)	No indicators observed
Observable Components						
A. Identify and/or revise outcomes for the child and family that are functional. Key indicators include: <input type="checkbox"/> Connect child/family outcomes to priorities shared by the family (e.g. use information captured during the family assessment interview if applicable). <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss/Review how outcomes will build on what the IFSP team knows about the child's present level of development (e.g., "Right now, your child can... so the next step for this outcome would be to..."). <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss/Review how outcomes chosen by the family will support the child/ family's participation in naturally occurring routines (e.g., "You mentioned your family goes to..." "You stated you would like your family to be able to...").			4	3	2	1
B. Identify and/or revise strategies and activities to support the identified functional outcomes. Key indicators include: <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss/Review what the family is already doing in familiar places (e.g., "What have you tried when you go..." "Where else would you like to..?"). <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss/Review familiar things that motivate the child to learn (e.g., "What is your child's favorite toy?" "How does your child show you what she/he likes...dislikes...?"). <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss/Review how to support the child's interactions with familiar people (e.g., older siblings, child care provider).			4	3	2	1
C. Identify and/or revise the criteria for determining progress toward achieving outcomes. Key indicators include: <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss/Review what can be reasonably achieved in an agreed upon time frame. <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss/Review when the IFSP team will know the outcomes are achieved. <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss and/or review how the outcomes may need to change to reflect the needs, priorities, and lifestyles of the child and family.			4	3	2	1
Total: ____/12						
NOTES:						

Date of the Observation:	Type of IFSP Meeting: Initial, Six-Month or Annual	Person Observing:	Person Being Observed:			
IFSP Meeting: Essential Practice #5: Prepare the Family for Early Intervention Services and Next Steps.			All indicators observed	Most indicators observed (2 of 3 or 3 of 4)	Some indicators observed (1 of 3 or 2 of 4)	No indicators observed
Observable Components						
A. Identify/Review services and supports necessary to achieve the identified outcomes. Key indicators include: <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss/Review the family’s resources related to the outcomes (e.g., use information captured during the family assessment interview if applicable, ask questions like, “Who is helping you with this now?” ”How is that agency/person assisting you and your family?”) <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss/Review any additional resources the family needs (e.g., child care options, utility assistance). <input type="checkbox"/> Identify or review the Primary Provider who will assist the family with IFSP outcomes. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify or review whether the Primary Provider needs assistance from others (e.g., use Incremental Decision Making, identify supporting and/or ancillary providers).			4	3	2	1
B. Identify/Review next steps in preparation for services to begin or continue. Key indicators include: <input type="checkbox"/> Explain/Review the process for services to begin, continue or change (e.g., timely services, when Providers will visit, how often). <input type="checkbox"/> Identify/Review the best way to communicate with the family when scheduling visits or meetings (e.g., who to contact, method of contact via text, call, email). <input type="checkbox"/> Explain/Review the Service Coordinator and Provider roles (e.g., the Service Coordinator checks in frequently with the family to address questions/concerns; the Primary Provider visits the family regularly for services).			4	3	2	1
C. Identify/Review next steps in planning for upcoming IFSP meetings. Key indicators include: <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss/Review the frequency of IFSP meetings based on when the next meeting with the family will occur (e.g., Six-Month review, Annual, Transition). <input type="checkbox"/> Explain/Review how changes in the family’s life may impact future services or settings (e.g., having a baby, changing job, new child care, changing insurance coverage). <input type="checkbox"/> Explain/Review how the Early Intervention Team (EIT) supports the family (e.g., Providers keep progress notes, Service Coordinator reviews progress notes, the EIT strategize during meetings).			4	3	2	1
Total: _____/12						
NOTES:						

References for Essential Practices and Each Observable Component

*(NOTE: AUP= Agreed Upon Practice 7KP= Seven Key Principles DEC-RP= Division of Early Childhood- Recommended Practices)

Essential Practice	Observable Component	Sources for Technical Assistance and Follow-Up Training
#1: Identify/Review the Concerns, Priorities, and Resources of the Family	A.	AUP (First Contacts with Families from Referral to the IFSP Meeting) #1 7KP #4 DEC-RP Assessment- Engaging Families as Partners in Their Child’s Assessment Checklist
	B.	AUP (First Contacts with Families from Referral to the IFSP Meeting) #7 7KP #2 DEC-RP Family- Informed Family Decision-Making Practices Checklist
	C.	AUP (First Contacts with Families from Referral to the IFSP Meeting) #6 7KP #3 DEC-RP Assessment- Engaging Families as Partners in Their Child’s Assessment Checklist
	D.	AUP (First Contacts with Families from Referral to the IFSP Meeting) #6 7KP #5 DEC-RP Family- Family-Centered Practices Checklist
#2: Establish and Maintain a Collaborative and Respectful Climate for All IFSP Team Members, Including the Family.	A.	AUP (IFSP Meeting) #2 7KP #4 DEC-RP Teaming & Collaboration- Families are Full Team Members Checklist
	B.	AUP (First Contacts) #2 (IFSP Meeting) #1 7KP #4 DEC-RP Teaming & Collaboration- Communication for Teaming and Collaboration Checklist DEC-RP Teaming & Collaboration Practitioner Guide 1.1
	C.	AUP (First Contacts) #2 7KP #4 DEC-RP Teaming & Collaboration- Communication for Teaming and Collaboration Checklist DEC-RP Teaming & Collaboration Practitioner Guide 2.1
	D.	AUP (IFSP Meeting) #2 7KP #4 DEC-RP Family- Family-Centered Practices Checklist DEC-RP Family- Informed Family Decision-Making Practices Checklist DEC-RP Family Practitioner Guide 1.1
#3: Prioritize the Family’s Concerns Considering Child and Family Assessment Information.	A.	AUP (IFSP Meeting) #3 and #4 7KP #4 DEC-RP Family- Family Capacity-Building Practices Checklist
	B.	AUP (IFSP Meeting) #3 7KP #5 DEC-RP Family- Family-Centered Practices Checklist
	C.	AUP (IFSP Meeting) #3 and #6 7KP #5 DEC-RP Family- Informed Family Decision-Making Practices Checklist
#4: Determine/Review IFSP Outcomes for the Child and Family, Considering the Family’s Priorities.	A.	AUP (IFSP Meeting) #7 7KP #1, #2 and #5 DEC-RP Family- Informed Family Decision-Making Practices Checklist
	B.	AUP (IFSP Meeting) #6 and #7 7KP #1 and #5 DEC-RP Family- Informed Family Decision-Making Practices Checklist
	C.	AUP (IFSP Meeting) #6 and #8 7KP #5 DEC-RP Family- Family Engagement Practices Checklist

#5: Prepare the Family for Early Intervention Services and Next Steps.	A.	AUP (IFSP Meting) #7 7KP #2 and #6 DEC-RP Family- Family-Centered Practices Checklist
	B.	AUP (IFSP Meting) #11 and #12 7KP #4 DEC-RP Family- Family Engagement Practices Checklist
	C.	AUP (IFSP Meeting) #1 AUP (IFSP Meeting) #12 7KP #4 DEC-RP Family- Family Engagement Practices Checklist